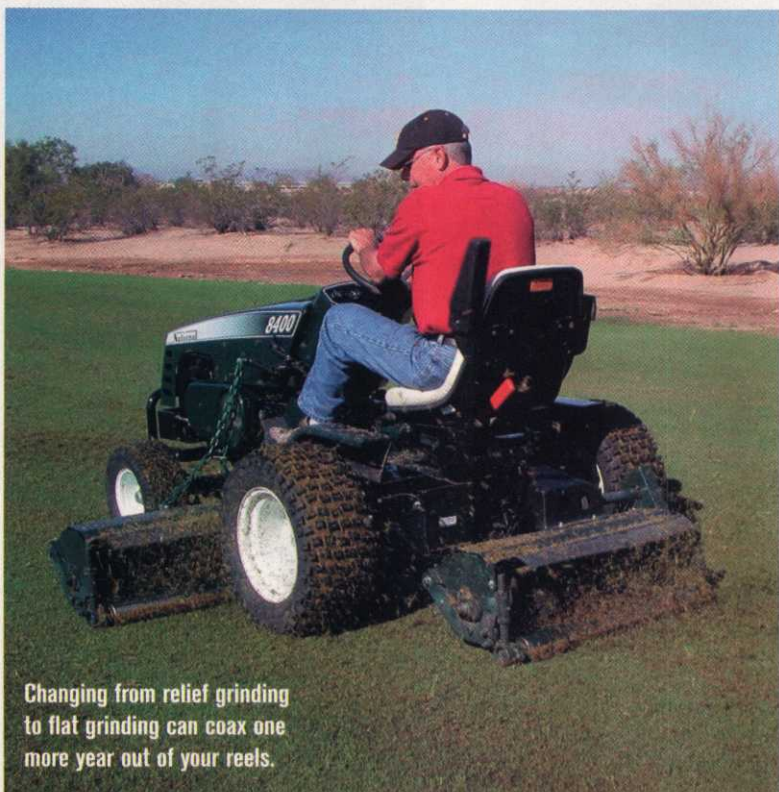


Hanging On

Here's how to get one more year out of that old mower in these budget-conscious times



NATIONAL MOWER

Changing from relief grinding to flat grinding can coax one more year out of your reels.

BY FRANK H. ANDORKA JR., MANAGING EDITOR

The general manager is riding you hard to keep expenses down and not make any unnecessary purchases before the end of the year. Then you visit your aging mowers in the maintenance building and wonder how you're going to get one more year out of them before you have to buy new equipment.

Fear not. *Goldom* went to the experts and asked them what they suggest superintendents do to coax one more year out of an aging mower. Here are some of their suggestions:

- **Follow the maintenance schedule in the owner's manual.**

If you haven't already been doing this, any-

thing else you do will probably be fruitless, says Stan Kinkead, president of National Mower.

"If superintendents are just now thinking about how to prolong the life of their mowers, it's probably a little late," Kinkead says. "This is an issue they should be worried about from the beginning."

Adhering to the preventative maintenance schedule will prevent a complete breakdown of the machine that will force superintendents to purchase a new one, says Joe Zvanut, a spokesman for Jacobsen.

"It's cheaper to maintain the machine from the beginning than purchase a new one," Zvanut says. "Make sure you know what needs to be replaced when and do it. A well-maintained machine is the best way to get maximum use out of it."

As part of following a preventative maintenance schedule, superintendents should create daily checklists for their mechanics to do before the machines go out on the course, says Carlos Calderon, services marketing manager for The Toro Co.

Once you've done all the scheduled preventative maintenance, there are other steps you can take to squeeze one more year out of your machine.

- **Keep track of the maintenance you do.**

Good records can let you know when a machine might be getting near a scheduled maintenance time, which is particularly important when it comes to maintaining older mowers, Zvanut says.

"There are actually computer programs that will let you keep track from your desktop of how many hours a machine has logged," Zvanut says. "These procedures are standard in the trucking industry, and we're seeing more superintendents moving in that direction."

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■ Wash the machine.

Jeff Chapin, category product manager for the golf and sports turf division at John Deere, says keeping a machine clean helps prevent rust and corrosion, and lets you see potential problems like the beginning of rust and leaking hoses.

"You want to spot problems as soon as possible before they become so big that you have to replace an expensive part," Chapin says. "Keeping the machine clean will make the process easier."

■ Don't scrimp on spending money for quality oils and greases.

Kinkead says some superintendents don't purchase the proper oils and greases for their machines because they say the products are too expensive. That's a big mistake.

"More expensive oils and lubricants cost more because they're better,"

Kinkead says. "It proves the old adage, 'You get what you pay for.' Using the proper oils, no matter what the cost, will prevent the damage that using inferior oils can cause."

■ Consider getting a professional inspection from the manufacturer for your machines.

Calderon says superintendents should consider having mower company mechanics periodically do inspections of their older machines. At Toro, such an inspection leads to a customized maintenance schedule.

"We can tell you what parts will need to be replaced on your specific machine," Calderon says. "It helps you plan more effectively when you might need to make purchases."

■ Switch from relief grinding to flat grinding to get one more year out of the reel.

If your mechanic is relief grinding the reels to keep the blades sharp, changing

the method to flat-grinding will extend the life of the reels, Kinkead says.

"It's a simple change in procedure, and it will allow you to coax one more year out of the cutting units," Kinkead says. "It's not something a lot of people think about."

Deere's Chapin says keeping the blades sharp is one of the best ways to keep the old machine running.

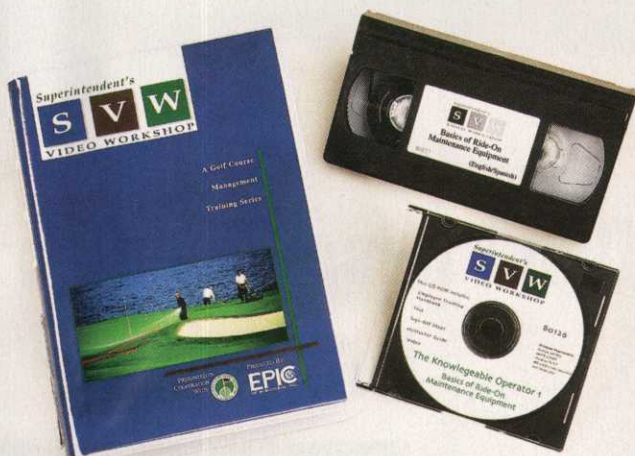
"Dull blades cause the hydraulic equipment to work much harder than they would if the blades were sharp," Chapin says. "The mechanic should make sure to bring the blades back to factory specifications every time he sharpens them."

Chapin also suggests that superintendents send their mechanics to dealer-sponsored training sessions so they can keep up on the latest recommendations to keep mowers running. "It's a good place to learn all you need to know about getting the maximum life out of every piece of turf equipment you own." ■

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